

**DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**<http://www.dfg.ca.gov>

MARINE REGION

20 Lower Ragsdale Drive, Suite 100

Monterey, California 93940

(831) 649-2870



September 25, 2003

Dear Marine Recreational Fishery Participants and Interested and Affected Parties:

Existing regulations adopted by the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) provide authority to the Department of Fish and Game (Department) to close either or both recreational or commercial sectors of the cabezon, greenlings, and California sheephead fisheries when their allowable harvest levels are projected to be reached. At that time, the Department is required to notify the Commission and all those affected of an upcoming closure via Department news releases and/or notification letters at least 10 days in advance of the specified date.

**This letter is to inform you effective at midnight on Wednesday, October 8, 2003, the recreational fishery for cabezon (*Scorpaenichthys marmoratus*), greenlings of the genus *Hexagrammos* (including kelp and rock greenling), and California sheephead (*Semicossyphus pulcher*) will be closed for 2003 or until further notice, pursuant to Title 14, California Code of Regulations (CCR) §52.10.** The prohibition on the landing of cabezon, greenlings, and sheephead (CGS) will be in effect throughout the State of California. The closure will apply to all recreational angling and diving activity in all waters and at all depths, and includes all methods of take.

Recreational fishing for rockfish, lingcod, and California scorpionfish will continue to be authorized within existing bag limits and depth constraints. As a result of these closures, pursuant to Title 14, CCR, '27.60(b)(2), the rockfish, cabezon, and greenling (RCG) complex sport bag limit of 10 fish can only include rockfish. Two fish sublimits of shallow nearshore rockfish as defined as black-and-yellow, gopher, kelp, grass, and China will still apply.

Based on projections from recent recreational catch estimates derived from the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS), the recreational allocation of 84,330 pounds of cabezon, 26,403 pounds of greenlings, and 135,524 pounds of sheephead for calendar year 2003 will be taken by the closure date.

Fishery sampling efforts have revealed a large number of anglers caught an unexpectedly high number of fish just after the season opened for cabezon and greenling in the area south of Cape Mendocino (Humboldt County). Higher catch rates are likely due to the restriction of angling to waters less than 120 feet where cabezon and greenlings are common. Coupled with fish caught in early 2003 in the area north of Cape Mendocino where the season was open, and fish caught in the rest of the state prior to the open season, the annual limits have been or are about to be reached.

Catches for shallow nearshore rockfish are also high, which may lead to DFG closing that recreational fishery in November. Reaching the harvest limits for cabezon so quickly is considered an indication that the recreational allocation of shallow rockfish

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will be met in the next few weeks because those fish occupy the same nearshore waters and are caught in conjunction with CGS. The potential for a closure is mentioned here to give affected parties advance notice for planning purposes. If closure of the recreational shallow nearshore rockfish fishery is determined to be warranted, the Department will provide formal notification to anglers as described in the first paragraph.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Ms. Deb Wilson-Vandenberg, Research Manager in the Department's Marine Region, at (831) 649-2892.

Sincerely,



Patricia Wolf  
Regional Manager  
Marine Region

cc: Deb Wilson-Vandenberg  
Department of Fish and Game  
Monterey, California

Fred Wendell  
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Monterey, California